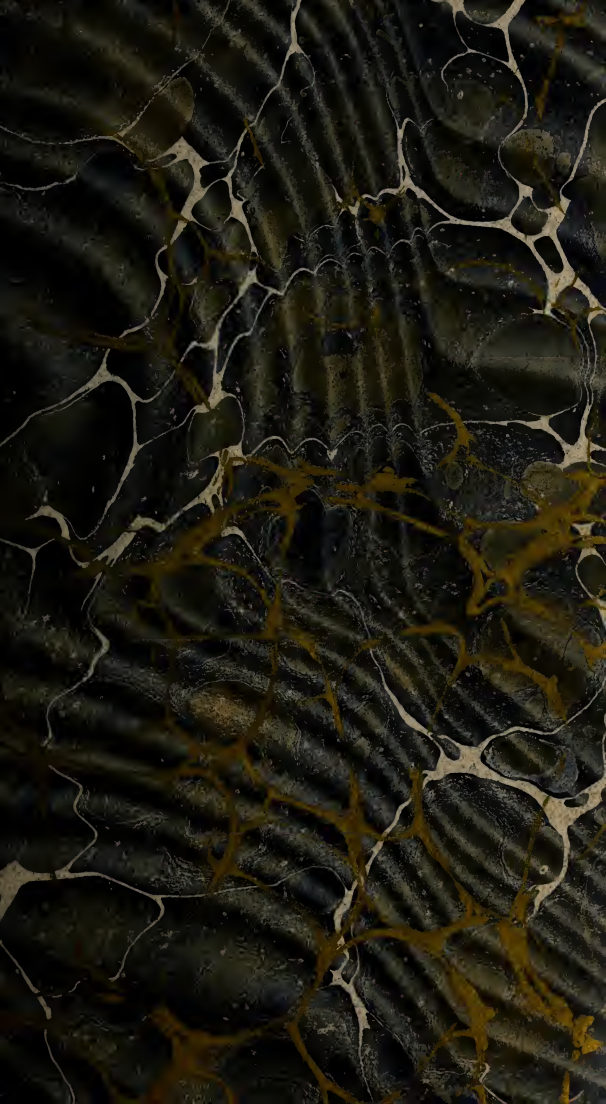




R875743



Library
of the
University of Toronto

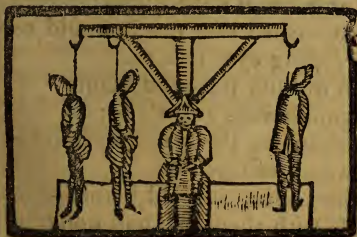


1334

AN ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE, TRIAL, & EXECUTION
OF
ALEXANDER THOMPSON
WHO WAS EXECUTED
IN THE CITY OF YORK,
On Wednesday, 15th Dec. 1843,
FOR THE CRUEL
MURDERS

Of his Wife and Four Children, and afterwards hung his aged Mother on a Tree in the Garden.

WITH THE DUMFRIES TRAGEDY.



YORK:
PRINTED FOR PETER BROWN.

Dumfries Tragedy, &c.

This day I sing in plaintive strains,
And here with grief I tell,
A youthful maid from England came
In Dumfries town to dwell:
Her character was always good—
Great honour to her name;
Each breast where tender feelings glow
She will their pity claim.
And often I have seen this maid,
With health and pleasure gay;
But when she came to marriage life,
Her joys all fled away.
No more the rose blush on her cheeks
In beauty did appear,
And pale and sorrowful she grew
With each returning year.
And often she was heard complain,
Among the neighbours round,
Bad treatment preyed upon her heart,
And grievous was the wound.
She often did her husband blame
For hunger and hard blows;
And often wished that death would come
Her weeping eyes to close.
She often did her husband blame
For drunkenness and strife;
And, in despair, she would exclaim—
Oh! weary of this life.
His mother, also, she did blame—
Friends with them she had none;
Thus, wretched, friendless, far from home
Her peace of mind was gone.
And in that fatal, dismal hour,
She took her babies two,
Then went down to the flowing tide

To bid this world adieu !
 Ye parents, who have children dear,
 Oh ! for one moment think,
 What must a mother's feelings be
 On death's most awful brink !
 What must a mother's feelings be--
 Oh, oh ! her fate deplore--
 She took her babies in her arms,
 And sunk—to rise no more !
 The last great struggle now is done—
 The spark of life is fled ;—
 But Hope has said their souls to Heaven
 Were by bright angels led.
 The corpse were got of all the three,
 And now they rest in peace,
 Within the Old Kirk burying-ground,
 St. Michael's of Dumfries.—William Wilson.

the vicinity of the City of York, lived one Alexander Thompson, whose parents left him a very handsome fortune, he married a lady in the same place who also had a very great fortune she had five children by him, but through a riotous and wicked life, and living with a harsh, he was reduced to poverty, which caused him to commit those cruel deeds, as the above states, the execution of Alexander Thompson took place on Wednesday, the 1st of November, in front of York Castle, the trial of the prisoner took place before his Lordship at the late sessions, he was indicted for the wilful murder of his wife and four children, and his mother aged 65, the guilt of the prisoner was proved beyond doubt, not only from the evidence of various witnesses but also from the confession of the prisoner himself, the jury instantly returned a verdict of guilty, on which his Lordship put on the black cap in the most impressive manner passed upon him the awful sentence of death, imploring him to make the best

use of his time as he had to hope for no mercy in world, notwithstanding the earnest appeal of his Lship, the prisoner exhibited the utmost indifference hardihood, and it was not until placed in a condemnell that he felt the full force of his awful situation the fear of death and the dread of soon meeting an offended God, awakened his guilty conscience and the first quest he made was that the Reverend Mr. Wilton might be sent for, and he desired a wish that he might see his son and other friends, where he made a full confession of all his guilty life, and exhorting his companions to reform from their wickedness to the paths of virtue, and hoping that his unfortunate end might be a warning to both old and young, and acknowledged the justice of his sentence and died in peace with all men, on the morning of execution he was attended by the chaplain of the jail the Reverend Mr. Wilton, with a firm step he appeared on the platform, the rope was instantly adjusted and the fatal bolt withdrawn and after a few convulsive struggles he ceased to breath. The crowd was very great.

Good parents all that now those lines do hear
Observe them well & I'm sure you'll drop a tear
The like of this has never yet been known,
The world has now so very wicked groan.
In the city of York there a wealthy man did dwell
He had one only son, 'tis known full well,
His parents they did greatly him adore,
And he indeed was heir to all their store.

His tender father as we understand,
Was snatched away by death's most awful hand
Before his son arrived at sixteen years,
Leaving his lovely wife in floods of tears.

She very tender was to her son dear,
The best that could be bought the son must wear
And all he wanted ne'er was him denied,
At length he grew to a great height of pride,

At cards and dice her substance he consumed,
 Nothing but vice did in this youth abound,
 He often cursed his mother to her face,
 When she did tell him of his wicked race.

At last unto a charming maiden fair,
 He was married as I to you declare,
 Six hundred pounds a-year with her tis known,
 But her dear parents were dead and gone.

He seem'd to love her as his life,
 But now observe what caused all their strife,
 He on a wicked harlot cast an eye,
 And often did frequent her bad company.

All sorts of costly robes he did for her buy,
 Which made this young man's money fly,
 And all to keep her in her wanton pride,
 Nothing that she did ask must be denied,

At length his wife the same did hear,
 And often said to him my dearest dear,
 The wicked courses that you take, in time
 Will bring to poverty both me and mine,
 Five lovely children by his wife he had,
 Which might have made a father's heart full glad
 But he was barbarous, cruel and severe
 To his wife, his mother, and his children dear.

At last his substance very short did grow,
 Yet to this wicked harlot he would go,
 But as his money it grew very scant,
 His Miss turned cold and seemed discontent.

Saying this trade will never do for me,
 Then to his wife and children he would flee,
 Their rings and clothes and all that he could find
 He'd bring to her, their cries he did not mind.

At last this course he could no longer run,
 His wife, poor soul, her substance it was gone,
 His aged mother had but little left,

And almost of her senses was bereft.

One day as Miss and he together were
 She in a passion said, I do declare,
 If you some money have not got for me,
 I will no longer keep your company.

He in a fury to his wife went home,
 And found her with the babes making sad moan
 Some money I will have, to her did say,
 Or else I'll murder you this day.

My dear, said she, I've none to give to you,
 With that he in a passion straightway flew,
 And barring up the door, to her did come,
 And through her on the floor there along.
 He gagged her mouth and bound her every limb
 At last one of the children said to him,
 Father, do not kill my mother, I pray,
 For a bit of bread we have not touched to-day.

He turned about and at the child did gaze,
 The devil did his reason so amaze,
 He with a knife that was both keen and sharp,
 Did stab his tender babe unto the heart.

His loving wife, she saw the deed he'd done,
 While tears from her eyes like fountains run,
 What, dost thou weep to see thy infant die,
 I will despatch thee likewise instantly.

Then with the knife that killed her infant dear
 Her throat he straight did cut from ear to ear.
 The other infant then aloud did cry,
 To see its mother there a-bleeding lie.

He straightway went & took him by the hand,
 While the poor babe did trembling stand.
 Thy life I fain would save, to it did say,
 But I fear that thou wilt me betray.

But nine years old, this boy was no more,
 He also laid it wallowing in its crimson gore.

And then to search the house he did begin,
 But no money he could find therein.
 So then straightway out of the house he went,
 The door did fasten, being discontent.
 Unto his aged mother he then did go,
 Whose tender heart was overwhelmed with woe.

The mother straightway rose her son to meet,
 And presently fetched him some food to eat,
 Saying your welcome my dear son,
 I'm sorry, he replied, for what I've done.

For joy his aged mother wept amain,
 And will my son his wickedness refrain,
 That I may comfort have in thee, my son?
 But little did she think what he had done.

At last this cruel wretch, void of grace,
 He with his hand did strike her on the face,
 And gagged her mouth in dismal sort also,
 And by the hair he dragged her to and fro.

Unto the orchard he did drag her there,
 And on the tree hanged her up by the hair,
 Tying her aged arms likewise behind,
 Saying, now the money I'll go find.

When he had taken all that he could find,
 Unto his harlot straightway he did hie,
 And told her all the things that he had done,
 And how his mother on a tree was hung.
 She answered, why did you not kill her too,
 Come, instantly to London let us go.
 He replied, my dear it shall be so,
 But God above the matter all doth know.

Next day one of the neighbours did espy
 His mother hanging on a tree so high:
 The same did raise the town the sight to see,
 Who took her breathless corpse from off the tree
 And running straightway for to call her son,

As soon as e'er unto the house they run,
 They found it fastened, and no answer made,
 Which put their hearts in further fear and dread

The doors then they broke open with all speed
 A sight would make a heart of stone to bleed,
 To see the mother and the infants dear.

Lie in their gore—Lord, what a sight was there
 Murder, O Lord, is hateful in thy sight,
 Thy Divine Providence brings it to light.

The murderer was taken on the road,
 And unto justice brought, with one accord.

He was condemned to suffer for the same,
 And the people all hated his name.

As soon as he came to the fatal tree.

He wept and wrung his hands most bitterly.

Saying, Christians all pray for my sinful soul,
 My sins are indeed very gross and foul,
 My wife, my children, and mother dear,
 For murdering them I now must suffer here.

My infants blood for vengeance now doth cry,
 My virtuous wife she stands before my eyes,
 My aged mother, too, methinks I see;
 You graceless children all be warned by me.

Be sure you shun lewd harlots' company,
 You with a virtuous wife may happy be,
 But I cruel wretch her blood most dear did spill
 That never did nor thought me any ill.

How can I cast my eyes to Heaven so high,
 Oh, blessed Saviour!—do not me deny.

I hope, good Christians, for my soul you'll pray
 While thus he spoke, the bolt was drawn away.

You parents, and likewise you children, pray,
 Observe what I do say to you this day,
 Ye children obey your parents, serve the Lord,

A Crown of Glory will be your reward.



